

TURKEY is a large game bird of North America that is related to the pheasants. Biologists know of two kinds of wild turkeys. One is the *ocellated turkey* of Yucatán and Guatemala, a brilliantly colored bird with eye-like spots on its tail. The other is the wild turkey of Mexico and the United States. At one time many wild turkeys lived as far north as Maine and southern Ontario. They were a favorite bird of the pioneer hunters.

The adult male turkey is about 4 feet (1.2 meters) long, with a plumage of metallic green, copper, and bronze. The body feathers have black tips. The tail and upper tail feathers of the wild turkey in eastern North America are deep reddish-brown. Those of the Mexican wild turkey have white tips. A long tuft of bristle-like feathers hangs from the center of the male's breast, and his legs have spurs. His head and neck have no feathers. A fleshy growth on the front of the head is called a *snood* or *dewbill*. The turkey has a pouchlike area at the front of his throat, called a *wattle*. Small reddish growths of skin at the base of the throat are called *caruncles*. The female is smaller than the male. Females look duller and few have bristles on the breast. Male turkeys are called *toms*, and females are called *hens*. The name for a young turkey is *poult*.



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Domestic turkeys have long provided Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner for many families in the United States.